

# Why is Diversity Important?

Diversity is needed and desirable. It's that simple. One of the components of the Cooperative Working Agreement between every SWCD, RC&D, the IDA, AISWCD, IARC&D and NRCS is the protection of civil rights in the delivery of, and participation in our programs and services.

While each of us makes a concerted effort to provide our programs and services equally to all, there may be groups or individuals that remain un-serviced as we have not yet recognized their needs.

Having individuals in a leadership role from a diverse background that represent diverse priorities better equips us to recognize and service the needs of all those groups and individuals who use natural resources in what ever manner.

# What can YOU do to increase diversity?

*There are many ways SWCD Boards and RC&D Councils can collectively or individually impact diversity. It might involve changing perspectives or how we look at our teams, recognizing opportunities, or even more concrete outreach efforts. Some ideas to consider include:*

- When time comes for the annual election of directors, seek out and appoint a “nominating committee” made up of individuals outside of your regular board. This allows for a different perspective in looking for new people to serve either as full voting members or associates.
- Consult field office/RC&D staff when seeking recommendations for potential candidates to forward to the nominating committee. Tap into established networks and make them work for the organization.
- Develop a list of key contacts within your community to participate on the nominating committee or provide a possible list of candidates for the Board/Council.
- When working with clients who strike you as especially active or motivated in resource issues, invite them to be involved in a more powerful and professional way—join the team!
- Have the staff develop an annual client/audience list of those who have shown interest in the board's activities. This list could be potential new directors or members that can add new life to the team.
- Hold a public meeting to raise community awareness and involvement. This gives you a chance to meet and identify new associates. Public meetings can help you identify new or growing concerns that pertain to the long-range plan of your District or Council.

## Resources~

**“Making Diversity Work”**—A 23-minute video on managing diversity.

**“Managing the Multicultural Workplace”**— One hour video for managers or leaders.

**“Cross Cultural Communications”**—Video with tips on effective communications with a diverse staff (1 hour, 26 minutes).

**“Cultural Diversity and Awareness”** A brief powerpoint presentation that discusses the concepts and raises awareness.

*Contact your local SWCD/NRCS office at the USDA Service Center to obtain or view these resources or discuss the benefits of diversity.*



## Let diversity benefit your SWCD or Council!

Involving more people, especially those with a diverse background, as Full or Associate Board and Council Members allows for and creates several benefits:

- Allows higher productivity levels
- Encourages more local ownership of natural resource issues
- Offers staff and team members a chance to be educated and more aware of differing issues
- Assists the District/Council in meeting annual plan of work goals
- Provides a broader range of experience to help your team deal with issues relating to programs, resource problems, and personnel issues

**New people ~New Thoughts ~New Ideas  
New Opportunities!**



# Diversity~

***Let it Work Wonders***

***for Illinois' SWCD  
Board of Directors &  
RC&D Councils***



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